

Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Testing of Fire Protection Systems

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Code Requirements

The Seattle Fire Code requires that all fire protection systems (such as fire alarms, automatic sprinkler systems and standpipes) be periodically tested at regular intervals. This is separate from the regular building inspections conducted by the Seattle Fire Department.

Periodic testing helps ensure that fire protection systems function as designed and reveals defects, if any, which require attention. The Seattle Fire Code, Section 901.6, requires that each owner, property manager, or person designated in a lease maintain all fire protection systems, on the premises, in full working condition at all times.

General Information

The responsible party must ensure that valid testing of a building's fire protection systems takes place within proper intervals. Any time a deficiency impairs the system, the responsible party is expected to have the damaged, failed, or defective part repaired or replaced in a timely manner. Other deficiencies must be scheduled for repair in a timely manner.

The last page of this CAM has a chart showing the test intervals for each type of system. In addition, there are secondary tests and certain maintenance processes that must be performed periodically. The intervals for secondary procedures are one, four, five, six, ten, 12, 20, and 50 years depending on the type of system or component, and are defined in national standards including NFPA 25 and NFPA 72.

Only certified technicians are allowed to install, maintain, test, and repair fire protection systems within the city of Seattle. The Certification Unit of the Seattle Fire Marshal's Office administers the certification tests and issues the certificates. For more information on certification, review [Administrative Rule 9.01.13](#) or call (206) 386-1351.

After a fire protection system is tested or repaired, the technician must update the service tag or label on the system to indicate its condition:

- Red labels/tags indicate that the system is impaired.
- Yellow labels/tags indicate that the system has deficiencies.
- White labels/tags indicate that the system operates as designed.

The design for labels and tags is prescribed in [Administrative Rules 9.02.14](#) and [9.04.14](#).

The technician must also fill out a report showing:

- What tests and inspections were performed.
- Any deficiencies that were found.
- The technician's evaluation of the overall condition of the system (status).

The Seattle Fire Code requires that the technician supply a copy of the report:

- To the responsible party on the premises. Reports must be maintained on the premises for a minimum of three years.
- To file at the testing company's office.

If a planned or emergency impairment is anticipated to take a system out of service for more than eight hours, the Seattle Fire Department must be notified. This notification allows the Department to assess the



risks and make any operational decisions necessary to ensure response-readiness and the safety of building occupants and fire fighters.

For timelines and information on how to notify the Seattle Fire Department of impairments anticipated to last more than eight hours, refer to [Administrative Rule 9.02.14](#), call the Fire Marshal's Office at (206) 386-1450, or visit our website: www.seattle.gov/fire/FMO/confidenceTesting/ct.htm

The insurance carrier, the alarm company, the building owner/ manager, and/or any supervisors or tenants in the areas to be affected should also be notified of the impairment and provided with an estimate of how long the system(s) might be out-of-service. These same parties should be notified when the system is returned to service.

Selecting a Contractor for Testing and Repairs

The system owner, building management company, or lease-designated person (also referred to as the "responsible party") is ultimately responsible for ensuring a Seattle Fire Department certified technician does the testing and makes any subsequent repairs. The Seattle Fire Department cannot make a specific recommendation about what testing company to use, but does provide a list of companies that employ certified technicians within the city: <http://www.seattle.gov/fire/FMO/confidenceTesting/Seattle%20Fire%20Department%20-%20Companies%20with%20Certified%20Technicians.pdf>. To check that a specific technician has current certifications for your type of fire protection system, call (206) 386-1351.

The Seattle Fire Department also recommends taking basic consumer precautions when hiring a contractor for system testing and repairs. Obtain multiple bids and request references for the required work. Contact the Better Business Bureau regarding the companies you are considering.

Compliance

The responsible party may receive a notice of violation (NOV) from the Seattle Fire Department requiring repair to the system(s) to correct deficiencies specified on the inspection report if those deficiencies have not been corrected. The NOV will establish a date for compliance. If the responsible party has not made the corrections, the file may be turned over to a Seattle Fire Department

Compliance Office in the Fire Marshal's Office. Subsequent inspections by the Fire Marshal's Office may incur a re-inspection fee, in addition to further legal action.

Table 1: Test Frequencies for Fire Protection Systems

System Type	Test Frequency
Fire Alarm	Annually (Optional: Quarterly for high-rise buildings)
Fire Pumps	Annually
Standpipe and/or Hose Cabinets	Five Years
Automatic Sprinklers	Annually
Emergency Generator	Annually
Smoke Control	Annually
Foam Systems	Annually and Five Years
Fire Escapes	Five Years
Alternative Automatic Fire Extinguishing System	Annually
Commercial Cooking Rangehood Extinguishing System	Servicing required every six months